

# THE EFFECTIVE USE OF LABELS IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

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Strategic Studies

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTIVE USE OF LABELS IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION, by MAJ Valiant A. Haller, 98 pages.

Labels and brands are designed to evoke emotion in all of us. With time, these labels enter common vocabulary in unique and specific ways. Organizational labels establish the tone for the specific group—friendly groups as well as threat groups. The primary question is, “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of national strategy?”

Because President Barak Obama emphasized the employment of strategic communication in the 2010 *National Security Strategy*, the United States must consider the labels used to address emerging threats. The informational instrument of national power must lead the national reaction to global security issues. The United States must be in the forefront of the conversation as the global discussion continues of how to refer to adversarial or threat groups such as ISIS.

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the importance the labeling of threat groups is to information as a source of national power. The efficient use of information will serve to set the tone for unified action against threat groups and adversaries. National leadership must clearly express the national strategic direction for all governmental, military, non-governmental, private sector organizations, and others to follow.

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## ACRONYMS

BH	Boko Haram
CSCC	Department of State Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications
DAESH	Al Dawla al-Islamyia fil Iraq wa'al Sham (Arabic words that mean the same as ISIS)
DIME	Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic
DoD	Department of Defense
DoS	Department of State
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas (Spanish for the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces)
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
JP	Joint Publication
NSS	National Security Strategy
RAFT	Relationships, Actors, Functions, and Tensions
USG	United States Government
U.S.	United States



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Introduction

We must also be more effective in our deliberate communication and engagement and do a better job understanding the attitudes, opinions, grievances, and concerns of peoples—not just elites—around the world.

— President Barack Obama  
*National Security Strategy 2010*

Labels and brands are designed to evoke emotion in all of us. With time, these labels enter common vocabulary in unique and specific ways. Organizational labels establish the tone for the specific group—friendly groups as well as threat groups. The primary question is, “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of national strategy?”

Modern state adversaries, non-state adversaries, and threat groups have an unprecedented access to a global audience. Any individual, or organization is able to positively or negatively affect the opinions of the general public instantly through the use of information technology. Because of this access, the role of developing a narrative to generate public support becomes increasingly important. The onus is on United States senior leadership to deliver an appropriate narrative to establish the tone for future operations. This narrative must be given in an effective and timely manner. A crucial part of the narrative is the label affixed to the targeted threat group.

Because President Barak Obama emphasized the employment of strategic communication in the 2010 *National Security Strategy*, the United States must consider the labels used to address emerging threats. As an instrument of national power,

information must lead the national reaction to global security issues. The United States must be in the forefront of the conversation as the global discussion continues of how to refer to adversarial or threat groups such as ISIS.

Organizations seeking to market themselves spend a considerable amount of time considering the brand or label by which they will be known. The amount of time and consideration a group takes to craft their own label must be matched by the amount of time taken to choose the label the U.S. will use to address the group in question. It is incumbent on national leaders to inspire the population to follow their vision for the direction the country should go.

Joint Publication (JP) 1 outlines four “instruments of national power” and their efficient employment as essential to furthering national interests. These instruments of national power are, Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic (DIME). Examples of the Diplomatic instrument of power are the treaties and alliances entered into by the United States Government and other national governments. Examples of the Informational instrument of power at strategic levels are declarations from the President and policies passed by Congress regarding and defining national interests. Examples of the Military instrument of power can be lethal or non lethal. Military demonstrations and relocation of forces are used as non-lethal means to reach US interests. Lethal uses of the military instrument are tailored to the situation and entail the use of troops to conduct combat operations. Examples of the Economic instrument of power are US participation in international markets and coordination with the financial organizations of other nations.

The information instrument of national power interacts with each other part of DIME to communicate the intent of the action taken. Efficient use of Information provides the citizens of the US a needed clarity of purpose for the actions being taken toward a specific issue. When national leadership informs the nation regarding actions that will be taken to counter a threat to national security, the label used should be a big part of the communication. The decision to label the threat should be carefully considered to define the posture taken against the specified threat.

The efficient use of the DIME results in a successful “whole-of-government” approach to addressing issues facing the nation. A fully comprehensive response to addressing threats to national security must fall within a unified action approach. Joint Publication 1 describes unified action as the coordination and synchronization of “military forces and nonmilitary organizations, agencies, and the private sector to achieve common objectives” (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2013, II-8). Use of the similar language and narrative among these various organizations will strengthen the informational instrument of power and demonstrate a concerted unity of effort.

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the importance the labeling of threat groups is to information as a source of national power. The efficient use of information will serve to set the tone for unified action against threat groups and adversaries. National leadership must clearly express the national strategic direction for all governmental, military, non-governmental, private sector organizations, and others to follow.

### Background

The concept of this research evolved from questions that began while stationed in Colombia. While serving as the intelligence officer for a planning and assistance training

team supporting a Colombian Joint Task Force, I observed a shift in public opinion against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) when the Colombian government began identifying them as a narco-terrorist organization (ONT-FARC). I believe the public opinion shift was the result of the national government, the military, and the media using the narco-terrorist label when discussing the FARC. Most societies romanticize revolutionaries and view them as positive forces for necessary change. Society generally views terrorists and drug dealers as negative forces that to be removed.

### Problem Statement

The purpose of this thesis is an attempt to determine if the United States should use labeling in strategic communications when referring to adversarial groups. The research will attempt to demonstrate effectiveness of labeling adversary groups in strategic communication by examining cases in recent history.

### Primary Research Question

The primary research question for this thesis is, “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of the narrative as part of national strategy?” The answer to this question could lead to national policy that results in more synchronized communications from national senior leaders. This unified communication may result in a more efficient use of the informational instrument of national power.

### Secondary Research Questions

Secondary questions are designed to assist in answering the primary research question. John Creswell describes subquestions, or secondary questions, as useful in helping to “narrow the focus of the study but leave open the questioning” (Creswell 2014,

140). Each case study uses these questions as the basis of analysis. Questions that don't apply to the specific case are identified within the cases in chapter 4. Some of the secondary questions include:

1. What labels were used to identify the threat group, and by whom?
2. What was the narrative presented by the government and the threat group?
3. What effect did the narratives have on the local and national population?
4. Whose label has history associated with the threat group, the national, or the threat groups'?
5. How were cultural paradigms considered during narrative development?
6. Was the national government successful in shifting public opinion by a different label than that used by the particular threat group?
7. Which element of national power, if any, was first used? The DIME paradigm will be used as the framework to answer this question.
8. How timely was the strategic response to the threat presented?
9. Did acknowledgement of the threat group in strategic communication affirm their standing?

### Methodology

This qualitative analysis uses comparison case studies of historical examples that demonstrate the use of labeling and propaganda by governments and their leaders.

Further description of the methodology is found in chapter 3.

### Definition of Terms

Any discussion of strategic communication and labeling of specific groups necessitates the definition of common terms used throughout this thesis. Although the majority of terms should be familiar to the reader, they are defined here for clarity.

Entity: The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines an entity as: “something that exists separately from other things and has its own identity” (Oxford University Press 2012). The term entity is used in this thesis when discussing groups that originated from a larger group have have taken a distinct identity.

Label: The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines labels as: “1. to fix a label on [something] or write information on [something]; 2. to describe sb/ sth in a particular way, especially unfairly” (Oxford University Press 2012).

Narrative: The term narrative will follow the definition listed in ADRP 5-0 as shown:

A story constructed to give meaning to things and events. Individuals, groups, organizations, and countries all have narratives with many components that reflect and reveal how they define themselves. Political parties, social organizations, and government institutions, for example, all have stories bound chronologically and spatially. They incorporate symbols, historical events, and artifacts tied together with a logic that explains their reason for being. To narrate is to engage in the production of a story—an explanation of an event or phenomenon by proposing a question or questions in relation to the artifacts themselves. These questions may include—

What is the meaning of what I see?

Where does the story begin and end?

What happened, is happening, and why? (Headquarters, Department of the Army 2012).



Organization: The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines an organization as “a group of people who form a business, club, etc. together in order to achieve a particular aim” (Oxford University Press 2012).

Strategic Communication: This thesis will use the definition of strategic communication found in Joint Publication (JP) 5-0: Joint Operation Planning:

Strategic communication (SC) refers to focused USG efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of USG interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with and leveraging the actions of all instruments of national power. (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2011, xiv)

Terrorism: The *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* defines terrorism as: “the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force a government to act” (Oxford University Press 2012).

Threat group: This term is used to designate organizations that pose a threat to national security.

Unified Action: The term unified action will follow the definition provided in Joint Publication 1 as shown:

Unified action synchronizes, coordinates, and/or integrates joint, single-Service, and multinational operations with the operations of other USG departments and agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) (e.g., the United Nations), and the private sector to achieve unity of effort. Unity of command within the military instrument of national power supports the national strategic direction through close coordination with the other instruments of national power. (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2013, xiii)

### Limitations

The most important limitation encountered while researching this thesis is the time available for compiling and analyzing the data used. Time is a significant

consideration for the ISIS and Boko Haram (BH) case studies, due to the recent nature of events. Ongoing events will continue to present opportunities for further study in the use of labeling in the narrative for countering adversarial organizations.

### Delimitations

In order to narrow the scope of this study, a delimitation is emplaced on the Nazi case study. The delimitation focuses the Nazi study on the labels and propaganda used to target Jews as the adversarial group. Studies have been, and continue to be conducted examining the propaganda employed by Axis and Allied forces during World War II.

Another delimitation is the establishment of an information cut-off date. A cut off date allows the researcher sufficient time to analyze the compiled data and to arrive at a complete conclusion within the perscribed timeline for thesis completion. The information cut-off date of March 31, 2015 is imposed on the ISIS, Boko Haram, and the United States strategic communications case studies. The current nature of these cases prevent a thorough analysis of the labels to refer to these threat groups as the informational part of the comprehensive strategy.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the primary question as, “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of national strategy?” This question stemmed from observing an apparent shift in public opinion against the ONT-FARC based on the label used in governmental strategic communication. An analysis of the effectiveness of labels is conducted in this thesis. The methodology used has been described above.

The next chapter, chapter 2, is a review of the available literature regarding the use of labels to counter threat groups as part of strategic communication. This literature review includes a description of the sources used to arrive at the conclusion discussed in chapter 5. The literature review also identifies other available studies that were not used within this research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter identifies the research conducted to answer the primary question, “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of the narrative as part of national strategy?” This chapter reviews the various studies that have been conducted on the topic of strategic communication, political labeling, and propaganda. This literature review includes studies that were used as sources toward developing the analysis and conclusions as well as studies that were not used.

The literature review is arranged in the same order as the chapter 4 case studies. Literature and studies not used in a specific case are listed at the end of this chapter. Each review consists of a brief analysis of the source gathered, a discussion of how the source relates to the discussion of labeling, and whether the source was used within this research. Four case studies are discussed and analyzed as a basis for the conclusions and recommendations in this thesis.

#### Proliferation of the “Jewish Threat” Propaganda in Nazi Germany (1933-1945)

The first case examines the use of propaganda by the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, commonly known as the Nazi Party. Numerous sources and studies have been conducted analyzing the Nazi propaganda machine, but few sources have focused primarily on the effectiveness the labels used. The case study is a relationship, actor, function, and tension (RAFT) analysis of the communication leaders within the Nazi regime and resistance organizations.

The primary sources for Nazi RAFT analysis are as follows, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* by David Welch, *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda* by Steven Luckert and Susan Bachrach, and *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* by Jeffrey Herf. Because Nazi propaganda leading into and during World War II has been extensively studied, this thesis will focus on the labels used and their effect on public opinion.

*The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* by Jeffrey Herf focused on the targeting of Jews by the Nazi regime. Herf's study assisted in the identification of the labels used by the Nazi regime to influence public opinion against the perceived threat. The main chapters within this book with direct application to this thesis are: Chapter 1 "The Jews, the War, and the Holocaust," Chapter 2 "Building the Anti-Semitic Consensus," Chapter 3 "'International Jewry' and the Origins of World War II," and Chapter 6 "The Jews Are Guilty of Everything" (Herf 2006).

*State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda* by Steven Luckert and Susan Bachrach is published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. This book "shows that the Nazi propaganda machine was a highly sophisticated organization deploying tactics carefully crafted to reach diverse segments of the population and extending the party's appeal to the broad German public" (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, viii). This book narrates the Nazi use of labels in strategic communication next to the vivid posters used in the propaganda campaigns. The main chapters within this book with direct application to this thesis are: Chapter 1 "Propaganda for Votes and Power: 1919-1933" and Chapter 2 "Power and Persuasion in the Racial State: 1933-1939" (Luckert and Bachrach 2009).

*The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* by David Welch is an in-depth analysis of the Nazi propaganda machine. This study provided excellent background on the actions of Joseph Goebbels from his time before and after the Nazi regime took control of the German government. Welch also described in detail the establishment of the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda and the government take-over of the national communications instruments. He also dedicated considerable effort to determining the propaganda intended to influence public opinion against the Jewish Threat and other perceived enemies of the German people. The main chapters within this book with direct application to this thesis are: Chapter 2 “Goebbels as Propagandist,” Chapter 3 “Restructuring the Means of Communication,” and Chapter 4 “Propaganda and Public Opinion, 1933-9” (Welch 1993).

There are few studies focusing on the communication efforts of anti-Nazi resistance organizations. Most studies focus on the covert groups whose attempts to stop the Nazi regime focused on the killing of Adolf Hitler. These books and studies provide a keen insight into segments of the German population who disagreed with the actions of the Nazi party and Hitler himself. Some of these books include: *Killing Hitler: The Plots, the Assassins, and the Dictator who Cheated Death* by Roger Moorhouse, by Susan Ottaway, among others. Significant resistance efforts that did not involve overt use of labels or strategic communication include the Operation Valkyrie attempt on the life of Adolf Hitler.

Two sources are used in this thesis to discuss the anti-Nazi efforts of resistance organizations in Germany. These sources were *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life* by Detlev J.K. Peukert and *Opposition and*

*Resistance in Nazi Germany* by Frank McDonough. Both of these works agree the organized resistance fell along three primary lines: political organizations, industrial workers, and youth protests. McDonough's work provides a brief overview of each of resistance effort as well as listing additional sources for further research. Peukert goes into more detail on the resistance efforts identifying specific leaders and their anti-Nazi actions. Peukert also seeks to explain German support of Nazi ideology and actions as a difference between "public show and private perceptions" (Peukert 1987, 187-196). The main chapters within *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life* by Detlev J. K. Peukert with direct application to this thesis are: Chapter 3 "Contradictions in the mood of the 'little man'," Chapter 7 "The working class: everyday life and opposition," Chapter 8 "Young people: mobilization and refusal," and Chapter 11 "Order and terror." The main chapters within *Opposition and Resistance in Nazi Germany* by Frank McDonough with direct application to this thesis are: Chapter 1 "Opposition and resistance from Social Democrats, Communists and industrial workers" and Chapter 2 "Youth protest."

### Countering Boko Haram through Strategic Communication

The second case is, the response to Boko Haram (BH) in Nigeria and Western Africa. Because the situation with Boko Haram in Nigeria continues to be very current and dynamic, future research will be necessary to definitively answer the primary question. There are few published works specifically relating to BH, and even fewer discuss the use of strategic communication by the group. Most sources used in the case study were found in news media, governmental websites, and electronic book publishing.

Three primary sources were used to provide a background of Boko Haram. The book *The Hunt for Boko Haram: Investigating the Terror Tearing Nigeria Apart* by Alex Perry dovetailed nicely with the information found in *Boko Haram: Between Myth and Reality* written by N. I. O. and D. L-B. The Amazon.com description of the authors of the latter book follows, “One of them lives in Nigeria and the other lives in the US. The Nigerian writer lives in northern Nigeria so he/she cannot dare use his/her real name. These two writers have chosen to break the silence, risk their own safety, and tell the story of the power of Boko Haram” (Amazon 2013). Both of these books describe the history of Boko Haram, its leaders, and their organizational themes and messages.

The U.S. government response to the Boko Haram threat was derived from several official documents and government websites. The U.S. Department of State (DoS) website provided a trove of information regarding the official U.S. response to BH. The 2010 and 2015 *National Security Strategy* delineates U.S. national interests in Africa and identifies the “violent extremist” label.

Other sources used included various news media websites and social media outlets. Some of the websites used include, NYTimes.com, msnbc.com, and YouTube.com. Dr. J. Peter Pham’s *Boko Haram’s Evolving Threat*, published by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, is a holistic analysis of the Boko Haram’s leadership, goals, grievances, and foreign connections. He also includes recommendations to counter the regional influence of BH. The book *West Africa, Islam, and the Arab World*, by John Hunwick, is a comprehensive telling of the history of Islam in West Africa. He also discusses the cultural tensions that have existed between black Africans and Arabs over the centuries.



### Countering the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria through Strategic Communication

The third case discusses countering the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) by using strategic communication. The ongoing nature of this situation will allow future research on the subjects of information operations, strategic communication, and strategy. Sources used for this case study will consist primarily of news articles, available governmental statements, and digital publications.

The primary sources that will be used in the case study analysis are, Stern and Berger's *ISIS: The State of Terror*, C. J. Knight's *ISIS: Origin of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria*, and A. Kh'an's *ISIS (ISIL) and World-Wide Caliphate Agenda: (Origin and Brief history of Caliphate, Moslem Terrorism and Islam)*. All three works generally agree on the origins and declared intent of the organization. The work by Stern and Berger is the most recent publication and conducts an in-depth analysis of the group by examining the available information. The works by Knight and Kh'an were written in semi-anonymity and provide insight into how some Muslims view ISIS.

The primary sources for the U.S. perspective are presidential statements, such as the *National Security Strategy* and the *State of the Union* addresses among others. Perspectives from the Department of State and Department of Defense are gathered from official statements such as DoS press releases and the DoD *Quadrennial Defense Review*.

Other sources used included various news media websites and social media outlets. Some of the websites used include, NYTimes.com, Washingtontimes.com, Huffingtonpost.com, theguardian.com, and CNN.com among others. An additional study that parallels the claim by President Obama that ISIS is not Islamic is the "Letter to Baghdadi". This letter is directed toward the ISIS leader, Al-Bahgdadi, from an esteemed

group of Muslim Scholars. Most notable in this letter are twenty-four examples of why Al-Baghdadi and ISIS are not upholding the principles of Islam through their actions.

#### The Use of Labels in United States Government Strategic Communication

The fourth case discusses the use of labels by the U.S. government in strategic communication. Sources for this case study will include United States national strategic documents, DoD joint publications, available governmental statements, and news articles. Because no singular threat group is identified, the labels shown refer to various adversarial organizations.

The primary sources for this case study are the *National Security Strategy* and *State of the Union* addresses written and presented by Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Department of Defense support to presidential narratives is shown in the *Quadrennial Defense Review* as well as doctrinal and pre-doctrinal publications. Finally Department of State support to presidential narratives in foreign policy are demonstrated through official statements and policies found on the State.gov webpage. Key to understanding the duties and responsibilities of members of the U.S. national government was the information contained in Drs. Snow and Brown's *Puzzle Palaces and Foggy Bottom: U.S. Foreign and Defense Policy-Making in the 1990s*. A brief overview of the theories and history of strategy formulation was Dr. Joseph Nye, Jr.'s *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*

Other sources used included various news media websites and social media outlets. Some of the websites used include, NYTimes.com, Washingtontimes.com, Huffingtonpost.com, theguardian.com, and CNN.com among others. Additional source

related to labels in strategic communication include Carol Winkler's *In the Name of Terrorism: Presidents on Political Violence in the Post-World War II Era*. This book discusses the use of labels in presidential public communication strategy from the Vietnam War, through the Iranian Hostage crisis and the Persian Gulf Conflict of 1991, to the 9/11 attack on the United States. It dovetails neatly with Anais Chagankerian's essay, "The Delegitimizing Power of the 'Terrorism' Label". Both works analyze the use of the "terrorism" label through the paradigm of intent of use as well as overuse.

#### Additional Sources

Additional sources helpful in the formulation and development of this thesis are identified here. Included here are studies available as a starting point for the suggestions for future research. Sources for specific topics are discussed together and other sources are included in a list and description format.

A foundational source warning against the excessive use of labels is *At War With Metaphor* by Erin Steuter and Deborah Wills. This book discusses the danger of using metaphors to dehumanize a culture or ethnic group. Examples demonstrate the use of animals such as rats, insects, snakes, and dogs in political cartoons to categorize a society. This is a warning to focus on the actions and activity of a threat group itself instead of the cultural, religious, or ethnic demographic composition of the group.

*Messages, Meanings and Culture: Approaches to Communication Criticism* (Sillars 1991): This book is comprised of discussions on how communication criticism is oriented toward understanding persuasion. Chapters of interest related to the subject of labels in strategic communication are, Chapter 2 "Analyzing Messages," Chapter 3 "Accurate Interpretation," Chapter 4 "Formal Criticism: The Aesthetic Worth of a

Message,” Chapter 8 “Narrative Analysis: Reading Culture through Stories,” and Chapter 9 “Ideological Criticism: Conflict and Power in Language and Culture.”

*Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices, Fourth Edition* (Trent 2000): This book describes the communication nuances considered during political campaigns. Chapters of interest related to the subject of labels in strategic communication are, Chapter 3 “Communicative Styles and Strategies of Political Campaigns,” Chapter 4 “Communicative Mass Channels of Political Campaigning,” and Chapter 10 “Advertising in Political Campaigns.”

*Planning for Action: Campaign Concepts and Tools* (Kem 2012): Descriptions of processes used by the U.S. Army and Joint forces to identify strategic and operational problems, develop the narrative, identify centers of gravity and develop courses of action.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the studies available in the subject of labeling in strategic communication. While the use of information as an instrument of power is the subject of many studies, there are few studies that analyze exclusively the use of labeling. Studies do show that labeling is an important step in crafting the narrative being transmitted for public consumption.

The next chapter, chapter 3, describes the methodology used to answer the primary research question regarding the use of labels to counter threat groups as part of strategic communication. The methodology chapter describes each of the five case studies analyzed in chapter 4. The conclusion of chapter 3 is a listing of the primary and secondary research questions used within this thesis.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This qualitative research study will be a comparative case-study analysis to answer the primary question, “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of national strategy?” The steps that will be taken to answer the primary research question are outlined below. Research will be conducted on four cases to determine the answer to the primary question. In three of the cases, a specific group has been identified as a threat and one case will show how the U.S. government has used labels to identify threat groups.

This chapter, chapter 3, includes a discussion of the primary research question as well as the secondary questions. The expected answers for each secondary question follow the each question. Following the thesis questions is a description of the case study methodology that will be used within this research. A detailed description of each of the five cases is follows. Finally, a blank Evaluation Criteria Table, and the description of how it will be used, concludes chapter 3.

#### Methodological Approach

The following is a step-by-step description of the methodological approach the researcher will use to answer the primary question.

Step one: The first step will be a review of the literature available on the topics of labels, information operations, and narrative framing. Results of the literature review will be found in chapter 2 of this thesis.

Step two: The second step will be the conduct of four case study analyses in which a relationship, actors, functions, and tensions (RAFT) discussion is first conducted to provide a historical overview of the situation. Following the RAFT analysis the secondary questions are used to determine an answer to the primary question that is applicable to the specific case study. The answers to the secondary questions will be aggregated using the table depicted below (table 1) to determine an answer to the primary question. The case studies and aggregated tables of results will form chapter 4 of this thesis.

Step three: The third, and final, step will be the development of recommendations based on the answer determined at the end of chapter 4. Discussion of the results, future policy recommendations, suggestions for further research, and closing thoughts will be found in chapter 5 as a conclusion to this thesis.

### Thesis Questions

The questions listed below will be applied to each case in order to determine the answer to the primary research question. An expectation of what the answers to the secondary questions follows the question. Questions listed below that are not applicable to the specific case study will be identified within the analysis segment of the case study.

1. Primary Research Question: Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of national strategy?
2. Secondary Questions:
  - a. What labels were used to identify the threat group, and by whom? The answers to this question are in the form of a list of labels used in the case

study. The entity using the label and if the label used was as a counter to another label.

- b. What was the narrative presented by the government and the threat group?

This answer will be given as a description of the narrative being used to transmit the label to the public. Direct quotes showing the use of the label by the threat group or the government will be included.

- c. What effect did the narratives have on the local and national population?

The answer to this question is an analysis of the expressed reactions to the labels and narratives used.

- d. Whose label, the threat group or the government, was successful in shifting public opinion? The answer to this question will be demonstrated by identifying an explicit shift in the use of a particular label. If a shift is identified, an analysis of the reason for the shift will be conducted. An analysis of the effect the shift has had will also be included as the answer to this question.

- e. Which element of national power, if any, was used to emphasize the communication of the label used? The DIME paradigm will be used as the framework to answer this question. Although use of the informational instrument of power is the focus of this thesis, an analysis of how the other instruments of power were used to support the narrative.

- f. How timely was the strategic response delivered? The purpose of this question is to assist in the determination that timeliness is important when establishing a label toward a threat group. The answer to this question will

compare the time elapsed between the threat group activity and the government response.

### Case Study Methodology

Each case study in chapter 4 is divided into five segments. The segments are, an introduction, a brief history of the situation, an examination of the labels used by the government(s) and threat group, an analysis of the effectiveness of labels, and a final summary of the case. The primary and secondary questions, listed above, are examined and answered in the final summary of each case. Included in the summary is the application of the lessons learned to strategic communication and the national sources of power.

Within the history and analysis segments of each case study will be a description of the situation following the Relationship, Actor, Functions, and Tensions (RAFT) framework. Colonel (Ret.) Eikmeier explains the RAFT framework as a system that can be used to understand an environment. He also specifies the perspective of the RAFT analysis “should be from each actor’s perspective” (Eikmeier 2010, 4). Use of the RAFT framework, as defined by Colonel Eikmeier, attempts to eliminate the pre-existent bias the researcher has.

### Case Study Description

Each case will include a discussion of the events, the strategic communication given, the effects of the labels used, the published public opinions formed, and an analysis of the event. The concluding analysis of each case results in a cost-benefit assessment of the labels used and the success or failure of the strategic communication.



The use of labels as part of strategic communication will be analyzed in the following five cases.

The first case examines the propaganda used by the National Socialist German Workers' Party, commonly known as the Nazi Party, leading into and during World War II (WWII). This case study is limited to the Nazi use of labeling and propaganda to influence public opinion against Jews in WWII. The result of this information campaign was the convincing of a majority of the population that the Jewish people were indeed a threat to Germany's prosperity.

The second case is, the United States Government and Western African responses to Boko Haram operations in Nigeria. The current nature of this case will allow future research on the subjects of information operations, strategic communication, and strategy.

The third case is, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, commonly known as ISIS. The current nature of this case will allow future research on the subjects of information operations, strategic communication, and strategy.

The fourth case examines examples of national political and military leaders who used labeling in Strategic Communication to provide the focus necessary to overcome an adversary or threat group. The lead entity for United States domestic and international communication is the Department of State Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. The Under Secretary supervises the communication of timely and accurate information to domestic and international media through Bureau of Public Affairs and the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC) (U.S. Department of State 2015).

### Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria for this thesis will be an aggregate analysis of the responses to the secondary questions to provide an answer to the primary question. The following table will be used to compile the answers will be found during the research phase of this thesis. The table will be gradually filled in as each case is analyzed. A partially filled in table will close the analysis segment of each case study. The completed table will be presented at the end of chapter 4 and used to answer the primary thesis question.

Table 1. Blank Evaluation Criteria Table				
	I. "Jewish Threat" Propaganda	II. Countering Boko Haram	III. Countering ISIS	IV. Labels in U.S. Strategic Communication
a. What labels were used and by whom?				
b. What was the narrative presented and by whom?				
c. What effect did the narratives have?				
d. Whose label shifted public opinion?				
e. Which element of national power was used to emphasize the label?				
f. How timely was the response delivered?				

*Source:* Created by author.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter described the methodology that will be used to answer the primary research question, “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of the narrative as part of national strategy?” The methodology includes a history of the situation discussed in the case study by using a RAFT analysis, followed by a conversational discussion of the secondary questions. The answers to the secondary questions will populate a table, like the one shown in table 1, which will be followed by an answer to the primary question based on the case study analysis.

The next chapter, chapter 4, analyzes the available literature to determine a definitive answer to the primary research question regarding the use of labels to counter threat groups as part of strategic communication. The chapter analyzes the four cases mentioned above and contextually answers the primary and secondary questions. The answer determined in this chapter is the basis for the conclusions and recommendations given in chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

This chapter answers the primary research question “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of the narrative as part of national strategy?” The analysis of case studies illustrates the effectiveness of labels in influencing public opinion. This chapter ends with a definitive answer to the primary research question based on the four case studies. The answer given here forms the basis for the conclusions and recommendations given in chapter 5.

The four cases examined here demonstrate how labels have been used in specific times against specific threats. In each of the four cases, one or more national governments and threat groups are identified. An examination of the labels and strategic communication used by Germany before and during World War II is an ideal starting point for the analysis conducted in this chapter.

#### Proliferation of the “Jewish Threat” Propaganda in Nazi Germany in 1933-1945

Therewith one started out with the very correct assumption that in the size of the lie there is always contained a certain factor of credibility, since the great masses of a people may be more corrupt in the bottom of their hearts than they will be consciously and intentionally bad, therefore with the primitive simplicity of their minds they will more easily fall victims to a great lie than to a small one, since they themselves perhaps also lie sometimes in little things, but would certainly still be too much ashamed of too great lies. (Hitler 1925, Kindle Location 5886)

## Introduction

This first case examines the use of propaganda by the National Socialist German Workers' Party, commonly known as the Nazi Party. The primary sources for this case study are as follows: *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* by David Welch; *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda* by Steven Luckert and Susan Bachrach; and *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* by Jeffrey Herf. The purpose of this case study is to answer the primary question, "Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of national strategy?" Because Nazi propaganda leading into and during World War II has been extensively studied, this thesis will focus on the labels used and their effect on public opinion.

The Nazi party is one of the best examples of effective labeling against perceived threat groups that history can offer. Opinions regarding the efficiency of the use of propaganda by Nazi party leadership continued until the war crimes prosecution. "Nazi leaders themselves believed that propaganda played a crucial role in the implementation of Nazi policies" (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 1). The Nazi's prolific use of labels in strategic communication influenced perceptions and opinions in populations throughout the globe to allow extreme and heinous acts to occur. This case study describes the ways local populations were the target audience for Nazi propaganda.

The purpose of labeling is common and can be found in strategic communication throughout history, to gain support for a person, an idea, a strategy, and a war. National leaders use strategic communication to increase awareness of perceived threats against the nation and to communicate a strategy against a perceived threat group. Nazi

propaganda communicated the strategy of the Vice Chancellor, Adolf Hitler, against the perceived threat groups, the Jewish people, homosexuals, the disabled, and others (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 86). The narrative theme that appealed to the populace was the protection of a weakened Germany.

It is appropriate to begin with an analysis of Nazi propaganda for several reasons. As previously stated, the success achieved by the Nazi use of labeling has not been achieved since. The propaganda successfully swayed the opinions and actions of large portions of the populations of Germany, a substantial portion of Europe, and other areas of the world. The extent of the propaganda success reached such levels that the Nazi agenda was able to conduct atrocities with the seeming approval of the nation's citizens.

The success of the Nazi propaganda machine extends to the point that some of the labels are still being effectively used today. Interestingly, a cursory inspection into the history of some modern threat groups shows a direct connection with Nazi ideology and propaganda. A few of these connections are described and explained in this thesis.

The format this case study follows begins with a brief history of the Nazi party. The history segment outlines the relevant timeline and focuses on the leadership and development of the Nazi propaganda campaign. Following the history segment is an examination of the labels and delivery methods by the Nazi party and their associates. The examination includes an analysis of the effectiveness of the labels on public opinion. The thesis questions, identified in chapter 3, are answered within the Analysis segment of this case study.

## History

This discussion of the historical events involving labels and strategic communication within the Nazi regime follows the RAFT model. Instead of beginning with relationships, the actors are first discussed with a summary at the conclusion of the history segment. RAFT is used twice here beginning with an analysis of the Nazi communication system and followed by analysis of resistance organizations.

The actors within the Nazi party discussed below are Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels. Although many other actors existed within the party leadership, these two were chosen due to the primary role in the selection and use of labels in Nazi strategic communication. The actions and labels used by Hitler and Goebbels are briefly discussed below.

Adolf Hitler was elected Vice Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933. Almost immediately following his election, Hitler, began the gradual restriction of public freedoms. Specific restrictions on the press and political meetings quelled the efforts of opposition parties. These restrictions resulted in opposition parties, the Communist Party in particular, losing the March 1933 election to the Nazi party (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 64).

Following the March 1933 election win, the Nazi party commenced the brutalization and incarceration of political opponents. These persons became the first residents of concentration camps within Germany, including the Dachau camp near Munich (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 66). These arrests and the earlier legal restrictions marked the dissolution of organized opposition to the Nazi party. The Nazi party had complete control of Germany. “On March 13, 1933, Hitler established the Ministry of

Public Enlightenment and Propaganda and appointed Nazi Party propaganda director Joseph Goebbels as his minister” (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 66).

Joseph Goebbels had been the director of the “party’s national propaganda apparatus” (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 56) since 1930. During this time his skill in propaganda development had been honed while editing the weekly Nazi newspaper *Der Angriff* (The Attack) until the 1933 appointment. Although this newspaper “featured articles blaming Jews for most of Germany’s ills” (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 42), blatant antisemitism was primarily avoided until after the Nazi party was in control. “As director of the Propaganda Ministry he [Goebbels] became the face of Nazi propaganda” (Herf 2006, 20). Following his appointment as minister, Hitler and Goebbels continued efforts to gain complete control of the “instruments of mass communication” (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 67).

Control of communication was essential to Nazi delivery of strategic communication and denying a voice to opposition. “The law banned Jews and those married to Jews from the practice of journalism” (Herf 2006, 18). This allowed the government to forcibly take over Jewish-owned businesses, beginning with communication-related ones like Ullstein and Mosse (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 68). A primary label that was used against the Jews was to identify them as “outsiders” and therefore not “Aryan” or worthy of first class German citizenship. The non-Aryan branding was the beginning of a dehumanization campaign that included the likening of Jews to rats and parasites. This association “suggested that the Jew differed from the Aryan not only in body but, more significantly, in soul, for the Jew had no soul” (Welch 1993).



The categorization of German society as being comprised of pure Germans and foreigners was calculated to instill distrust and rifts in the society. A true *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community) could not be achieved while the “outsiders” remained (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 86). Jews and other undesirables were portrayed as parasitic cultures that “fed off the host nation, poisoned its culture, seized its economy, and enslaved its workers and farmers” (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 86).



Figure 1. Behind the Enemy Powers: The Jew

*Source:* United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Behind the Enemy Powers: the Jew,” accessed 30 April 2015, <http://www.ushmm.org/information/press/press-kits/traveling-exhibitions/state-of-deception/behind-the-enemy-powers-the-jew>. During World War II, Nazi propagandists frequently depicted “the Jew” as a conspirator plotting world domination by acting behind the scenes in nations at war with Germany. This caricature represents the “Jewish financier” manipulating the Allies, Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Hanisch, artist; ca. 1942. –*US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Helmut Eschwege.*

*“The Eternal Jew”* (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 87) was the title of an anti-Jewish propaganda exhibition displayed at the Deutsches Museum in Munich from November 1937 to January 1938 as well as a film produced later on. The display and film were intended to show Jews as strange and savage people. The disclaimer included before the kosher slaughter scene in the film illustrates this concept. “The following pictures are genuine. They are among the most horrifying that a camera has ever recorded. We are showing them even though we anticipate objections on the grounds of taste. Because more important than all objections is the fact that our people should know the truth about Judaism” (Welch 1993, 101).

The label that was used in the narrative that “became the core of the coming conflict” was “international Jewry” (Herf 2006, 51). This label was used to associate Jews with enemy nations and ideas, specifically “international Communism” (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 124). Because Jews were planning to “exterminate all German people” (Herf 2006, 51) it was necessary to conduct military attacks on neighboring countries to protect Germany. Blaming of the Jews was cultivated before Hitler was elected and continued to escalate until the end of World War II. This narrative was distributed through Nazi posters and newsreels in 1943 and 1944 that “worked to strengthen popular resolve by ratcheting up fear of the consequences of a lost war and intensifying anti-Jewish sentiment” (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 134).

The RAFT model summary of the Nazi use of labels in strategic communication follows. The relationship between Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels was that of leader and disciple, respectively. Both shared a passionate hatred for Jews that resonated in their public addresses. The official function Goebbels served was as Minister of Public

Enlightenment and Propaganda to Reich Chancellor Hitler. Goebbels served this function by presenting to the masses the narratives and labels Hitler created. No tensions are apparent in the relationship between Hitler and Goebbels that affected their use of labels in strategic communication. Although the labels and strategic communication used by Hitler and Goebbels was effective in influencing a majority of the German population against the Jews, opposition did exist.

Opposition to Nazi party communication in the 1933-1945 timeperiod was an extremely dangerous and rare occupation. “In fact, active resistance against Nazism was undertaken by less than one percent of the German population” (McDonough 2001, 1). Nazi control of the instruments of communication and enactment of laws against political organizations denied the opposition a voice on the national stage. Organized opposition within Germany took three forms, (1) opposition from political organizations, (2) workers aligned with trade unions (Peukert 1987, 118), and (3) youth organizations countering the official Hitler Youth (Peukert 1987, 153).

The Social Democratic Party of Germany and the Communist Party of Germany were the primary political opponents to the Nazi party. The informational resistance offered by these two parties consisted of organizing anti-Nazi demonstrations, production and distribution of anti-Nazi leaflets, and publication of party-specific newspapers. Nazi targeting of overt resistance organizers forced these efforts to become more covert. Both Frank McDonough and Detlev J. K. Peukert discuss both opposition parties efforts to oppose the Nazi regime, these efforts were ultimately suppressed as described in this quote from *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*: “Organised resistance had been smashed in the waves of arrests of 1934-36, and it was

smashed once again when new attempts to rebuild it were made during the war in 1941-44. The nucleus of the labour movement, however, sustained its beliefs and its cohesion in small informal groups, and it was from these that the non-partisan Antifa (anti-fascist) committees and later the re-established parties and trade unions emerged in the years after 1945” (Peukert 1987, 125).



Figure 2. Picture Of People Giving A Nazi Salute,  
With August Landmesser Refusing To Do So

*Source:* Wikipedia, “August Landmesser,” accessed 1 May 2015, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August\\_Landmesser](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Landmesser).

People associated with the trade unions formed the second form of resistance to the Nazi regime. “Resistance workers formed the most significant component of the German resistance movement” (Peukert 1987, 118). Resistance “took a variety of forms, including absenteeism from work, sabotage of industrial machinery, the refusal to serve

in the German army and to give the Hitler salute” (McDonough 2001, 9). A demonstration of overt resistance is shown in figure 2. This photograph was reportedly taken at the launching of a ship from the shipyard in Hamburg, Germany in 1936. It shows a single individual standing blatantly refusing to render the Nazi salute. Communication among industrial resistance groups was in the form of private meetings and contact with former union officials who traveled the country as self employed laborers (Peukert 1987, 118-144). The public voice of these industrial and factory resistance groups was in the form of leaflets and newspapers. Individuals who were caught conducting subversive acts risked imprisonment in the concentration camps and even execution. Resistance from industrial workers was more covert and tolerated less than that of the youth organizations discussed next.

Youth resistance organizations originated as a rebellion against the Nazi-sponsored boys and girls clubs, the Hitler Youth and the German Girls League. “The two most significant youth groups in Germany during the Nazi era were the ‘Edelweiss Pirates’ (Edelweisspiraten) and ‘Swing Youth’ (Swing Jugend) (McDonough 2001, 15). These groups endeavoured to directly counter the rigidity of Hitler Youth and allow greater freedom from the discipline, surveillance, and assimilation intended by the Nazi organization. The communication methods used by these organizations included “nonconformist behaviour, conscious refusal, open protest, and political resistance” (Peukert 1987, 164). The youth organizations attracted membership from the late 1930s until 1945. The effect these groups had was minimal and they were relegated to nuisance status as shown in the following quote from Detlev J. K. Peukert in *Inside Nazi Germany*: “It quickly became clear, however, that while it was possible to make out precursor

groups and so-called ‘wild’ or unauthorized *bündisch* organisations in the early 1930s, there was no continuity of personnel (the ‘delinquents’ of 1935-37 had long since been called up for the front line) and there was no continuous intellectual tradition” (Peukert 1987, 154).

The RAFT model summary of the use of labels in strategic communication by opposition groups follows. The actors were political groups, organized groups of industrial workers, and youth. No apparent relationships existed between the resistance groups, however, all of these groups were dedicated to their anti-Nazi efforts. The functions these groups served were to contradict the established government and show dissent among the population. Tensions are demonstrated by the continued efforts of the Nazi regime to find, capture, and silence these groups. Many identified leaders were arrested followed by incarceration within concentration camps or executed. The assessed reasons for the minimal effect to the Nazi regime were a lack of public support and legal access to national communication instruments.

### Labels

What labels were used to identify the threat group, and by whom? The labels used by the Nazi regime are listed here. Resistance groups within Germany did not appear to use labels in an organized way to label the Nazi regime nor its supporters. The assessed reason for the lack of strategic communication from the resistance organizations is the Nazi control of communication mediums.

The Nazi party used a number of labels against the Jews during the time. Some of the labels applied are listed below.

1. “Non-Aryan” or impure: Jews and others were “viewed as genetically inferior and harmful to national health” (Luckert and Bachrach 2009, 86) thereby unworthy of mixing with “German-blooded” persons.
2. “Outsiders” that prevented the achievement of *Volksgemeinschaft*: These labels worked because they played on the perception that Germany had been unfairly treated by the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I.
3. The “*Eternal Jew*” label was used to illustrate the Jews as foreigners with traditions not in line with modern German society.
4. International Jewry: this label was used to show the connectivity of Jews across the world whose intent was to complete the subjugation and destruction of Germany that was begun at the end of World War I.

### Analysis

This segment answers the secondary questions identified in the methodology discussion in chapter 3. The first of the secondary questions was answered in the Labels segment above. Included with each answer are an explanation of the answer given and its application to the case study. After the questions are answered, the evaluation criteria table is filled in (Table 2: Evaluation Criteria–“Jewish Threat” Propaganda).

What was the narrative presented by the government and the threat group? The Nazi regime presented a narrative that the Jews were the root cause for the German demise. Hitler and Goebbels continued to blame the Jews until their deaths in 1945. One day before committing suicide on 30 April 1945 Adolf Hitler wrote: “Above all, I command the leadership and followers of the nation carefully to uphold the racial laws

and to engage in pitiless resistance against the world poisoner of all peoples, international Jewry” (Herf 2006, 262).

What effect did the narratives have on the local and national population? Nazi labels and narratives appear to have been extremely effective in influencing the German people against the Jewish threat. Peukert asserts that anti-Semitism was not a factor in the integration and mobilization of the population in support of the Nazi regime (Peukert 1987, 58). Regardless of an existent or non-existent anti-Semitism within the German population, there was very little dissent against the Nazi narratives or treatment of Jewish people.

Whose label, the threat group or the government, was successful in shifting public opinion? “Shaping popular opinion began with destruction of the free press” (Herf 2006, 18). Due to minimal support for anti-Nazi organizations, the regime labels were successful in directing public opinions against the Jewish threat. Allied victory against Nazi Germany prevented the complete annihilation of the European Jewish population and ended the war.

Which element of national power, if any, was used to emphasize the communication of the label used? The Nazi regime expertly used the informational instrument of national power by using all communication media for distributing the narrative. The economic instrument of power was used domestically when the Nazi regime took control of Jewish businesses by purchase or by force. Prohibiting Jews from participation and ownership of businesses also demonstrated use of the economic instrument of power. Finally, the military instrument was used to physically enforce the laws and corralling the Jewish population into ghettos and concentration camps.



How timely was the strategic response delivered? The Nazi strategic narrative was delivered immediately and consistently between 1933 and 1945. After the election of Hitler as Vice Chancellor in January 1933, and gaining parliamentary control in March of the same year, the Nazi regime began a determined effort to control the national instruments of communication (Herf 2006, 17-49). The establishment of the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda was established in March 1933 with Joseph Goebbels at the helm (Welch 1993, 28). “On December 12, 1933, major German press services were merged to form the official German News Agency . . . The German press had become a state monopoly” (Herf 2006, 18). Counter narratives were delivered throughout the same time period from political organizations (the Communist Party of Germany and the Social Democratic Party of Germany), industrial workers organizations, and youth organizations.

Table 2. Evaluation Criteria—"Jewish Threat" Propaganda				
	I. "Jewish Threat" Propaganda	II. Countering Boko Haram	III. Countering ISIS	IV. Labels in U.S. Strategic Communication
a. What labels were used and by whom?	Non-Aryan, Outsiders. International Jewry			
b. What was the narrative presented and by whom?	"Jews are subhuman and the root of all German problems"			
c. What effect did the narratives have?	Minimal resistance putting Jews in concentration camps			
d. Whose label shifted public opinion?	Nazi control of communication and harsh consequences shifted opinion against Jews			
e. Which element of national power was used to emphasize the label?	Information was complemented by Economic and Military instruments			
f. How timely was the response delivered?	Immediate and continuous pro and anti the Nazi narrative			

*Source:* Created by author.

### Summary and Application

Immediately upon gaining control of the government, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party took steps to control the national mediums of communication. They then widely disseminated the idea that the Jewish people were to blame for the economic and societal problems facing the German people. Increasing national pride was coupled with an escalated targeting of Jews; German success was dependent on Jewish extermination. A strong emphasis on communication of the Nazi agenda coupled with silencing opposition ensured public support for the government against the identified Jewish Threat. The

dehumanizing labels used by Hitler and the Nazi party was important to influencing popular opinion when combined with dominant control of national communication. Because a counter narrative was not allowed a national voice, and resistance organizations did not use specific labels, a shift in public opinion cannot be conclusively determined.

The primary question is, “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of national strategy?” Based on this case study the answer to the primary question is: yes, the labels used when discussing a threat group should be carefully considered. However allowing the freedom to voice opposition is important to truly gauge public support for the national strategy.

### Countering Boko Haram through Strategic Communication

#### Introduction

The purpose of this case study is to assist in answering the primary question, “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of national strategy?” The threat group identified known as Boko Haram (BH) operates in the northeast region of Nigeria and the neighboring countries. The use of labels in strategic communication by the United States and Nigerian governments are described and analyzed in this case study.

The Boko Haram RAFT analysis begins with a brief description of the history of the organization and the name they call themselves. This is followed by an explanation of the label “Boko Haram” and its origin. The RAFT analysis centers on the three primary leaders the group has had and their use of labels in strategic communication.

The delimitation imposed on this study of Boko Haram is in the form of an information cut-off. The date established in chapter 1 as the information cut off is March 31, 2015. The purpose of this delimitation is to provide a comprehensive evaluation of available data related to the use of labels in strategic communication within sufficient time to complete this thesis.

### History

This discussion of the use of labels in strategic communication regarding Boko Haram follows the RAFT model. As with the “Jewish Threat” case study above, actors are discussed first followed by relationships, functions, and tensions. The two RAFT analyses included here are, first of the Boko Haram group itself and second of the United States response to the group.

Boko Haram is the commonly known name for the group calling itself “*Jamaatu Ahlisunnah Lidawati wal Jihad*, Arabic for “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad” (Perry 2014, Kindle Locations 507-508). This group traces its beginnings back as early as 2002 in the Borno state of Nigeria. This is when the then leader “Muhammad Ali, declared the [Nigerian ]state corrupt and irredeemable” (O. and L-B 2013, 10). This organization has been led by three persons, Muhammad Ali, Muhammad Yusuf, and the current leader Abubakar Shekau.

Muhammad Ali created the organization to “carry out a revival of Islam” (O. and L-B 2013, 10) within the northern states of Nigeria. This goal was a direct reaction to his perceptions of both governmental corruption and a turning away from adherence to traditional Islamic principles. A 2003 confrontation with Nigerian security and law enforcement officials resulted in the death of Ali, among others, and the application of

the groups first label. The label applied to this organization was “Nigerian Taliban” (O. and L-B 2013, 11), a label the group appeared to enjoy due to its association with their heroes in Afghanistan.

Following the death of Muhammad Ali, Muhammad Yusuf assumed the leadership of the group. The leadership and preaching of Yusuf grew the organization by leaps and bounds in a relatively peaceful manner between 2003 and 2009. During this time, the theme and narrative of the group advocated a return to a time before Western influence and education existed. Yusuf “viewed both the political and religious leadership in Nigeria as corrupt and tainted by “Western-style ambitions,” and felt the introduction of Shari’a in the Northern states was insufficient” (Chatt et al. 2014, Kindle Locations 98-99). The recurring themes and messages against Western education resulted in the group being called “Boko Haram” (BH) by Nigerian journalists. Muhammad Yusuf was killed in 2009 during a raid on a BH compound by Nigerian security forces (Chatt et al. 2014, Kindle Location 128).

Abubakar Shekau became the leader of Boko Haram after the death of Muhammad Yusuf. Throughout his tenure of BH leadership, Shekau, has sought support from other threat groups like al-Qa’ida and, most recently, ISIS. His ways of seeking this support are by conducting similar styles of attacks, beginning with the 2011 suicide bombing of the United Nations (UN) building in Abuja, Nigeria. The Nigerian Government, the United Nations, and the United States immediately denounced this attack as a “transnational crime” carried out by an “international threat” that had adopted “methods and aims of global terrorists” (Murray and Nossiter 2011).

Shekau employs social media and communication networks to disseminate his strategic communication and narratives. “Unlike the charismatic and outspoken Yusuf, Shekau is a shadowy and reclusive figure. He avoids publicity and contacts the outside world via YouTube videos” (O. and L-B 2013, 44). He has used social media outlets to claim responsibility for numerous attacks including the 2014 kidnapping of over 200 schoolgirls (BBC News 2014). He most recently used an online audio statement to pledge allegiance to ISIS (*Daesh*) in March, 2015 (Ortiz 2015).

In summary, the three BH actors above have had a close and hierarchical relationship with each other. Death has been the only cause for replacing the group leader. Each leader functions as the primary spokesperson for the group to national and international audiences. No apparent tensions exist within BH that has reduced their use of labels in strategic communication.

The RAFT analysis of United States government response to Boko Haram begins with a brief overview of three primary actors, the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, and the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC). A brief description of the hierarchical relationship these actors have is then followed by the functions each serves within the scope of strategic communication.

President Barack Obama is the primary actor in the United States government use of strategic communication. The president uses the ‘terrorist’ term to identify the actions being used by threat groups to further their interests, not to categorize the groups themselves. The president has used the label “violent extremist” to categorize threat groups like al-Qa’ida within both the 2010 and 2015 *National Security Strategy* documents. Following is an example from the 2015 *National Security Strategy* where

President Obama used the label as a reference to Boko Haram, without naming the organization specifically. “Ongoing conflicts in Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic, as well as violent extremists fighting governments in Somalia, Nigeria, and across the Sahel all pose threats to innocent civilians, regional stability, and our national security” (Obama 2015a, 26-27). The establishment of the label “violent extremist” by the president has set the tone for its use by other U.S. government officials.

Secretary of State John Kerry has visited Nigeria on numerous occasions. He consistently condemns Boko Haram tactics and actions as working against regional stability. The label Secretary Kerry uses to categorize Boko Haram is “violent extremist” (Soergel 2015). This label is often juxtaposed against the news media labels that have been used to identify and categorize Boko Haram. These media labels are “Islamist insurgency group” (Murray and Nossiter 2011) and “militant Islamic group” (Soergel 2015). The difference in these two labels is the specific association with Islam.

Established in 2010, the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC) within the U.S. Department of State is “focused on undermining the terrorist propaganda and dissuading potential recruits” (Benjamin 2011). The CSCC also uses the label “Violent Extremism” to identify threat groups without associating them with a particular ethnicity, religion, or culture. The role of the CSCC was summed up by Alberto Fernandez, Coordinator for the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications as, “CSCC began with the idea that given the huge emphasis that [al-Qa’ida] places on media and propaganda, there was a real need for a USG entity

functioning as a “war room or campaign center, as you would see in an election,” to push back” (Fernandez 2013).

The relationship between President Obama, Secretary Kerry, and the CSCC is a hierarchical one. The President appoints the Secretary of State to “play the lead role in his administration’s foreign policy-making and execution” (Snow and Brown 1994, 90). In turn, the CSCC is Department of State bureau answering to the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (U.S. Department of State 2015).

Based on the hierarchical relationship, each subsequent actor follows the guidance of the higher echelon. President Obama delineates the national interests and language that will be used in reference to identified threat groups. Secretary Kerry communicates the established foreign policy using the same labels to refer to threat groups as the president does. Finally, the function of the CSCC is “to coordinate, orient, and inform government-wide foreign communications activities targeted against terrorism and violent extremism” (U.S. Department of State 2015). The CSCC is the actor responsible for the communication of the national narrative regarding threat groups to a global audience. Because of the echeloned relationship outlined above no noticeable tensions have been evident in the use of labels in strategic communication against Boko Haram.

### Labels

What labels were used to identify the threat group, and by whom? A number of labels have been identified in this case study. Both the threat group and the governmental entities have used labels in their strategic communication. Some of the labels are listed here along with the identification of who uses the specific label.



The overarching label being used to refer to this threat group is “Boko Haram.” This label is from the Hausa language and loosely translates as: “Western Education/ Book learning is Forbidden/ Sinful” (Chatt et al. 2014, Kindle Locations 56-57). This label continues to be used to refer to this group on the international stage by the media and governmental agencies.

Boko Haram uses the “jihadist” (Pham 2012) label to identify themselves. This label is used to indicate their devotion to the principles of Islam. The label also demonstrates their intent to “live a life under “true Islamic law” away from the corrupt society” (Chatt et al. 2014, Kindle Location 101).

The labels the United States Government has used to refer to this threat group are “Boko Haram” and “Violent Extremist”. The President of the United States, Secretary of State John Kerry, and the CSCC have used these labels in both written and spoken form. The consistent use of the label “violent extremist” by the U.S. government is important in that it does not discriminate between race, religion, or culture.

## Analysis

Table 3. Evaluation Criteria–Countering Boko Haram				
	I. “Jewish Threat” Propaganda	II. Countering Boko Haram	III. Countering ISIS	IV. Labels in U.S. Strategic Communication
a. What labels were used and by whom?	“Non-Aryan”, “Outsiders”. “International Jewry”	BH: “Jihadist” USG: “Violent Extremists” GoN:		
b. What was the narrative presented and by whom?	“Jews are subhuman and the root of all German problems”	BH: “We are true followers of Islam” USG: “BH is a destabilizing factor in the region”		
c. What effect did the narratives have?	Minimal resistance putting Jews in concentration camps	BH: ISIS has agreed to an alliance USG / Nigeria: Cannot be determined at this time		
d. Whose label shifted public opinion?	Nazi control of communication and harsh consequences shifted opinion against Jews	Final determination cannot be made, however, “Boko Haram” and “violent extremists” continue to be used		
e. Which element of national power was used to emphasize the label?	Nazi government used the Economic and Military instruments	USG: Diplomatic and Economic Nigeria: Diplomatic and Military		
f. How timely was the response delivered?	Immediate and continuous pro and anti the Nazi narrative	Immediate and continuous on a national and international stage		

*Source:* Created by author.

This segment answers to the secondary questions identified in the methodology discussion in chapter 3. The first of the secondary questions was answered in the Labels segment above. Included with each answer are an explanation of the answer given and its application to the case study. After the questions are answered, the evaluation criteria table is filled in (Table 3: Evaluation Criteria–Countering Boko Haram).

What was the narrative presented by the government and the threat group? The overall narrative Boko Haram presents is that of devotion to the principles of Islam and a dedication to establish Islamic-based rule within Nigeria. The narrative BH has presented to ISIS is one of similarity of purpose and beliefs. The international community, with the United States as lead, has presented a narrative denouncing Boko Haram as a destabilizing actor in the African region.

What effect did the narratives have on the local and national population? A definitive answer to this question cannot be given at this time due to the current and dynamic nature of BH activities and actions. Boko Haram has continued to be successful in attracting followers and support for their cause. “On March 12, 2015, the Islamic State accepted the pledge of allegiance from Boko Haram, according to an audiotape purportedly from its spokesman. “We give you glad tidings today about the expansion of the Caliphate to West Africa, for the Caliph, may Allah preserve him, accepted the pledge of allegiance of our brothers in Jama’at Ahl al-Sunnah Lil Dawa Wal Jihad [Boko Haram],” Adnani said, according to SITE’s translation” (Shay 2015). This alliance indicates ISIS believes the claims of Boko Haram to their understanding of the principles of Islam. Although the BH/ISIS (*Daesh*) alliance does not clearly describe the effect the narratives have had, it can be seen as an attractor for future increased support.

Whose label, the threat group or the government, was successful in shifting public opinion? The answer to this question cannot be definitively given until the resolution of the situation occurs. As the situation continues, Boko Haram continues to gain support and increase their activities in Nigeria and the region. They have also been successful in gaining support from ISIS on the international stage.

Which element of national power, if any, was used to emphasize the communication of the label used? The United States has exercised the diplomatic and economic instruments of power in response to the security threat posed by Boko Haram. These instruments have been used in the form of “limited monetary assistance and counter-terrorism training” (Chatt et al. 2014, Kindle Location 507) that have been provided to the Nigerian government and other affected nations in the region. The U.S. has also used the diplomatic instrument of power by “designation of Boko Haram and Ansaru as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO)” in November, 2013 (U.S. Department of State 2013).

The Nigerian government has responded with the diplomatic and military instrument of power to the Boko Haram threat. The Nigerian diplomatic response has been the enactment of the *Terrorism Prevention Act, 2011* and its amendment in 2013. This act labels threat groups as ‘terrorist organizations’ (National Assembly, the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2013). The act also establishes a legal system to arrest and prosecute persons convicted of conducting terrorist acts. The Nigerian government established a law that is not focused on a religion or culture.

The *Terrorism Prevention Act, 2011* focuses on the intent, or perceived intent, behind the commitment of heinous and subversive acts. Military and security force operations continue to be conducted to eliminate the threat posed by BH in Nigeria and limit their movements in the region. Military action includes the posting of two Nigerian Army divisions in northeast Nigeria (Reuters 2014).

How timely was the strategic response delivered? Responses to Boko Haram’s violent actions have been immediate from the Nigerian government, the United States,

and the United Nations. This was illustrated above in the suicide bomber's attack on the UN building in Nigeria. A more recent example of immediate responses occurred following the BH pledge of allegiance to ISIS (*Daesh*).

The counter message to the BH/ ISIS (*Daesh*) association was an attempt to cast doubt on Boko Haram's full inclusion in ISIS (*Daesh*), "the Arab world wouldn't see black Africans "as equivalent to them" (Ortiz 2015). This counter message is based on a cultural rift that has existed for centuries between Arab Muslims and black Africans. John Hunwick describes this rift in his book, *West Africa, Islam and the Arab World*, as being a conflict between true believers and "enslavable unbelievers" (Hunwick 2006, 89).

### Summary and Application

The RAFT analysis above shows a direct hierarchical relationship between the actors in both Boko Haram and the United States government. This relationship has resulted in an absence of tension that deteriorate the use of labels in strategic communication. The analysis also shows a clear delineation in the association of religion and culture to a threat group. BH associates itself exclusively to Islam while U.S. and other governmental entities describe them as "violent extremists". This refusal to tie a group to a particular religion furthers the purpose of increasing stability in the region.

The labels used by both the U.S. and Nigerian governments have been crafted to focus on how the activity affects the security in the region, instead of on a religion, race or culture. In fact, the Nigerian government act identifies an individual or a group by the effect on the environment caused by the actions they've committed. The delineation between identifying a threat group by a label that does not specify race, religion, or culture is important to maintaining the government's legitimacy.

The primary question is, “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of national strategy?” Based on this case study the answer to the primary question is: yes, the labels used when discussing a threat group should be carefully considered. However, yes is not the complete answer. In addition to yes, this case study shows that, the label should focus on the problem caused by the group rather than the composition of the group. This was shown in the U.S. government use of “violent extremists” without inclusion of a religious affiliation as well as the Nigerian government focus on the “acts of terrorism” being performed.

### Countering the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria through Strategic Communication

ISIL (Islamic state aka ISIS), Hamas, Hezbollah, al Qaida, Boko Haram and Taliban, Al Shabaab and the likes are thugs and goons, not affiliated with any religious sects. They are not Islamic. They are desecrating Islam and Moslems. These organizations are Terrorists; they happened to be Moslems or claim to be Moslems. (Kh'an 2014, Kindle Location 41)

#### Introduction

This case study discusses the current use of labels in strategic communication by governmental and non-governmental entities as well as the threat group itself. The threat group examined here is the *Islamic State in Iraq and Syria*, commonly known as ISIS. The current conflict with ISIS militants provides a clear look into how labels are used and will assist in answering the primary thesis question, “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of national strategy?” The current nature of the ISIS conflict leaves room for further research into the application of strategic communication and labeling of threat groups.

The ISIS case study describes the history of the organization before the 2003 beginning of operation Iraqi Freedom, through the events of 2014 and early 2015. An examination will be made of the labels and delivery methods by and against ISIS. The examination includes an analysis of the effectiveness of the labels on public opinion. The thesis questions, identified in the methodology, are answered as part of the conclusion of the ISIS case study.

The results from this case study are based on the available information. An information cut-off date of March 31, 2015 is imposed on this research to allow the study to be completed within the required timeline. Because the ISIS organization continues to be an active threat to U.S. national security and interests, further research should be conducted for continued refinement of the determined answer.

### History

This discussion of the use of labels in strategic communication regarding ISIS (*Daesh*) follows the RAFT model. As with the previous case studies, actors are discussed first followed by relationships, functions, and tensions. This case study uses the RAFT model to analyze the ISIS environment. The primary actors discussed are the leader of ISIS and the President of the United States. Relationships, functions, and tensions will be discussed at the end of this segment.

The first actor discussed in this RAFT study of the ISIS environment is the current leader of the threat group, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. As in the Boko Haram case study, the ISIS leader is the primary actor and sets the tone through by his use of strategic communication. Al- Baghdadi has effectively used social networks to disseminate the group ideology and narrative on an international stage. Baghdadi has announced the “aim

of the ISIS has been the establishment of an Islamic state” (Knight 2014, Kindle Locations 216-217).

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) dates back to 1999. ISIS was formed in 1999 by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi as “Jamā‘at al-Tawhīd wa-al-Jihād [JTJ] (‘The Organization of Monotheism and Jihad’)” with the intent of overthrowing the Kingdom of Jordan (Knight 2014, Kindle Locations 38-40). From this beginning, Zarqawi went through cycles of alliance and association with al-Qa’ida. “Zawahiri warned the al Qaeda in Iraq leader that he was far too free in his targeting of Muslim civilians and too prone to display “scenes of slaughter” (Stern and Berger 2015, 22). The differences between Zarqawi and al-Qa’ida stemmed from his use of extreme savagery and ultimately ended in dissociation from the al-Qa’ida network.

These differences of opinion ultimately led to the dissociation stemmed from the Zarqawi-led practices of disseminating acts of extreme violence on media networks. “Al-Zarqawi proved a dire pioneer in another important respect: marriage of horrific ultraviolence and mass media. Like ISIS commanders today, he was especially fond of beheadings and the attention they get in the West” (Weiss and Hassan 2015, 30). These methods continue to be used by the same organization, now named ISIS and its leader al Baghdadi.

ISIS has demonstrated a high level of efficiency in their use of the informational instrument of power to present their goals and ideology to the world. “On June 29 [2014], ISIS made a move in the world of ideas that was as bold as its military blitzkrieg on the ground. In an audio recording . . . ISIS declared that it was reconstituting the caliphate” (Stern and Berger 2015, 46). The declared establishment of a caliphate falls in line with



the use of the word “state” in their chosen name. The ISIS narrative is reinforced by their actions resulting in little doubt of their dedication to the declared purpose and mission.

The President of the United States is the second actor discussed in this RAFT analysis of the ISIS environment. As will be shown in the fourth case study the president sets the tone for the language used in reference threats to national security. On 10 SEP 14, President Obama stated, “ISIL is not “Islamic.” And ISIL is certainly not a state” (Obama 2014b). Because the president’s statement did not offer an alternative label or term, ISIS continues to be the name used to identify this organization. Eight days after President Obama’s statement, the French government announced they would no longer refer to the group as ISIS, but as *Daesh* (NASR 2014). Although this term has not gained much traction in the media, on Wednesday, 3 December 2014, United States Secretary of State, John Kerry used the *Daesh* term in reference to ISIS (Taylor 2014).

The refusal by the president to call ISIS a state is based on the criteria that define a state established by the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of a State in 1933. The treaty, to which the United States is a signatory, specifies four qualifications a state must possess in order to be recognized as “a person of international law” (Organization of American States 1933, 3). The four qualifications are: “(a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with other states” (Carroll and Sanders 2015, 3). The president is justified in his refusal to use the state label because ISIS does not meet any of the above qualifications. Just because he was justified, does not mean criticism would not follow the statement.

The efficient use of the informational instrument of national power is essential to presenting concise statements of national interests and strategy. The careful crafting of

the 2010 National Security Strategy and the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States set the precedent for President Obama to make definitive statements against ISIS. This precedent did not, however, preclude criticism from political opponents and pundits. A comprehensive narrative of the U.S. Government position on ISIS may have prevented some of this criticism from occurring. This understanding of the presidential intent may have led to a more unified whole-of-nation approach to dealing with the destabilizing effect ISIS continues to have in the Levant.

Opponents of the president and the media have exploited the informational gaps left by the statement. Demands that the president call the group Islamic and arguments for treating the group as a state have continued since the statement was given. This has caused the administration to focus on defending the statement, sometimes with the same arguments given above, instead of focusing on achieving the stated objectives of stability in the region. Because of the gap in establishing what to call the organization, “ISIS” continues to be the name used. Eight days after President Obama’s statement, the French government announced they would no longer refer to the group as ISIS, but as *Daesh* (italics added) (NASR 2014). Although this term has not gained much traction in the media, on Wednesday, December 3, 2014, United States Secretary of State, John Kerry used the *Daesh* term in reference to ISIS (Taylor 2014).

The relationship between these two actors is that of antagonists. The functions each serve is that of leadership, although each one in a unique way. President Obama seeks to lead the United States in protecting the national interests of regional stability in the Middle East. Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi seeks to lead ISIS in the establishment of a

caliphate by subjugating the residents of the desired territories. As antagonists, the tensions between these two actors are extremely strained and volatile.

### Labels

What labels were used to identify the threat group, and by whom? A number of labels have been identified in this case study. Both the threat group and the governmental entities have used labels in their strategic communication. Some of the labels are listed here along with the identification of who uses the specific label.

The labels ISIS has used to identify themselves are “jihadists” and “the truthful” (Stern and Berger 2015, 112). The most common label used by ISIS to identify enemies is “infidel” (Arango 2014). A person labeled an “infidel” is easily labeled a threat by using distortions of Islamic principles.

The labels President Obama has used are “terrorists,” “violent extremists,” “insurgents,” and “not Islamic” (Obama 2014b). These labels are used to dissociate the threat group from the religion of Islam. The focus continues to be the effect ISIS actions are having on the region, the security of partner nations, and U.S. national interests.

Entities outside of the two actors discussed here have begun identifying the ISIS threat group by the label *Daesh*. The etymology of this label is an acronym based on the Arabic words ‘*Al Dawla al-Islamiya fil Iraq wa’al Sham*’ (Taylor 2014). The French government has been routinely using this label since September of 2014 (NASR 2014). United States Secretary of State, John Kerry, also used the label in a December 2014 address at NATO headquarters (Taylor 2014). Finally, the Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbott “announced that from now he will refer to the Islamic State group as

“Daesh”, on the grounds that the terminology deprives the group of legitimacy among Muslims” (McConnell 2015).

### Analysis

This segment answers the secondary questions identified in the methodology discussion in chapter 3. The first of the secondary questions was answered in the Labels segment above. Included with each answer are an explanation of the answer given and its application to the case study. After the questions are answered, the evaluation criteria table is filled in (Table 4: Evaluation Criteria–Countering ISIS (*Daesh*)).

What was the narrative presented by the government and the threat group? The narrative ISIS seeks to present to the international community is, “We are strong, and we are winning” (Stern and Berger 2015, 112). The narrative being presented by ISIS to the residents of the occupied lands is, “Oh our people, *Ahlus Sunna* [adherents to the traditions of Islam], indeed the Islamic State exists only to defend you, and protect your rights, and stand in the face of your enemies” (Stern and Berger 2015, 112). The narrative being presented by President is, “With our partners in the region and around the world, we are leading a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL” (Obama 2015a, 26).

What effect did the narratives have on the local and national population? A definitive answer to this question cannot be given at this time due to the current and dynamic nature of ISIS activities and actions. ISIS has continued to be successful in attracting followers and support for their cause through their recruitment and propaganda efforts on the Internet and with social media. The most recent indicator is the pledge of allegiance received from the Boko Haram threat group, as was discussed in the previous

case study. A mixed effect to the narrative presented by President Obama has been identified. Although there is a domestic demand to identify ISIS as Islamic, the refusal has garnered support from partner nations.

Whose label, the threat group or the government, was successful in shifting public opinion? Although a definitive answer to this question cannot be determined within the timeframe of this thesis, a preliminary answer can be given. As mentioned in the answer to the previous question, ISIS recruitment efforts are still attracting followers. The fact that partner nations continue to support U.S. efforts to defeat ISIS in Iraq and Syria is an indicator that the president's narrative has been successful on the international stage. Only time will tell if public opinion will shift toward support of continued dissociation of threat groups with religion, cultures, or races.

Which element of national power, if any, was used to emphasize the communication of the label used? Although ISIS is neither a nation nor a state according to the Montevideo treaty definition, they have made an effort to use elements of national power in their activities and interactions with other entities. ISIS continues to use military force in an attempt to gain and hold territory in order to legitimize the "caliphate" that has been established. Additionally, the acceptance of allegiance from Boko Haram demonstrates an attempt to enter into diplomatic agreements. The president has used the diplomatic and military instruments of national power to counter the threat posed by ISIS to emphasize the labels and narratives being communicated.

How timely was the strategic response delivered? The response to ISIS strategic communication by President Obama occurred within a reasonable amount of time from the public beheading of American journalist James Foley on 19 August 2014. The

president considered the options available and decided to conduct air strikes against ISIS strongholds in Iraq and Syria (Obama 2014b).

Table 4. Evaluation Criteria–Countering ISIS ( <i>Daesh</i> )				
	I. “Jewish Threat” Propaganda	II. Countering Boko Haram	III. Countering ISIS	IV. Labels in U.S. Strategic Communication
a. What labels were used and by whom?	“Non-Aryan”, “Outsiders”. “International Jewry”	BH: “Jihadist” USG: “Violent Extremists” GoN:	ISIS: “jihadist”, “the truthful”, and “infidel” USG: “violent extremists”, “not Islamic”	
b. What was the narrative presented and by whom?	“Jews are subhuman and the root of all German problems”	BH: “We are true followers of Islam” USG: “BH is a destabilizing factor in the region”	ISIS: “We are strong, and we are winning” USG: “We will defeat ISIS”	
c. What effect did the narratives have?	Minimal resistance putting Jews in concentration camps	BH: ISIS has agreed to an alliance USG / Nigeria: Cannot be determined at this time	ISIS: support continues and recruitment rises. USG: mixed between domestic criticism of communication and support from partner nations	
d. Whose label shifted public opinion?	Nazi control of communication and harsh consequences shifted opinion against Jews	Final determination cannot be made, however, “Boko Haram” and “violent extremists” continue to be used	Final determination cannot be made, however, support continues for both ISIS and USG efforts	
e. Which element of national power was used to emphasize the label?	Nazi government used the Economic and Military instruments	USG: Diplomatic and Economic Nigeria: Diplomatic and Military	ISIS: Military and Diplomatic USG: Military and Diplomatic	
f. How timely was the response delivered?	Immediate and continuous pro and anti the Nazi narrative	Immediate and continuous on a national and international stage	USG: President Obama address was 22 days after the death of James Foley	

Source: Created by author.

## Summary and Application

The RAFT analysis above demonstrates the need for a complete narrative presented by the efficient use of the informational instrument of power. ISIS has shown a singular dedication to the accomplishment of their goals as presented in their strategic communication. This singularity of purpose has resulted in continued support from recruits attempting to join the group in the Levant region. Another demonstration of the continued support is through alliances pledged by other threat groups, most notably Boko Haram in Nigeria.

President Obama has presented clear intent toward the degradation and elimination of the threat posed by ISIS in his September 2014 statement. However, his statement was incomplete. The President's statement did not offer an alternative label to call the organization, nor did he explain why the organization was not Islamic. The precedent for rejecting ISIS' claim to be a state and Islamic was presented above. Additional energy has been exerted to explain the basis of the statement presented. This energy has shifted focus from the actions being conducted against ISIS to a defense of the narrative presented.

Another gap in the narrative presented by President Obama was not providing a counter narrative to ISIS' attempted use of Islam as a source of power and legitimacy. Establishing a label the group has to fight against, such as *Daesh* could have filled this gap.

The primary question is, "Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of national strategy?" Based on this case study the answer to the primary question is: yes, the labels used when discussing a threat group should be

carefully considered. However, yes is not the complete answer. In addition to yes, this case study shows that, choosing a label is important to prevent excess energy being expended in the defense of the narrative. In addition, this case study has shown the importance of a complete narrative when responding to threat group.

## The Use of Labels in United States Government Strategic Communication 2001-2015

### Introduction

This case study discusses the current use of labels in strategic communication within the United States government from 2001-2015. There is no single threat group identified in this case study, however the primary threats during this time period that are pertinent to this thesis are al-Qa'ida, ISIS (*Daesh*), and Boko Haram. This case study focuses on the reason national strategic communication has not associated threat groups with a religion. The answer to this question will assist in answering the primary thesis question, "Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of national strategy?"

"ISIL is not Islamic" (Obama 2014b), the consternation created by this statement within the country has resulted with some pundits calling for the president to specify that ISIS, al-Qa'ida and other terrorist organizations are Islamic (Carroll and Sanders 2015). The refusal by the president to associate threat organizations with a specific religion or ethnic group follows the precedent of previous presidents. The difference between Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon's use of the terrorist label during the Vietnam War is the nature of the enemy being faced. The Communist organizations Presidents



Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon labeled terrorists did not claim a religious basis for their actions (Winkler 2006).

The reason efficient use of the informational instrument is more important now than ever is availability of high-speed communications technology that is available at lower costs than ever before. Dr. Nye clarifies that “for more than 130 years, virtually instantaneous communication has been possible . . . the crucial change is the enormous reduction in the *cost* of transmitting information” (Nye 2005, 218). Because of the widespread availability of communications technology, the government should clearly communicate intent and purpose behind national interests and actions. National leaders who presenting fail to use information efficiently present a vulnerability for adversaries and threat groups to exploit.

Due to his level of responsibility, it is incumbent on the President of the United States to carefully consider the labels and terminology used in strategic communication as part of the informational instrument of national power. The 2010 *National Security Strategy* specifies strategic communication as “essential to sustaining global legitimacy and supporting our policy aims” (Obama 2010, 16). This statement was included in the “Whole of Government Approach” (Obama 2010, 14-16) portion of the 2010 *NSS*.

This case study is a brief RAFT analysis of the labels used in strategic communication within by the United States government from 2001-2015. This analysis revolves around the following primary actors, the President of the United States, the U.S. Department of State (DoS), and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). Included in the functions portion of the RAFT analysis is a brief discussion of the reactions to U.S. strategic communication from international actors.

## History

This discussion of the use of labels in strategic communication regarding Boko Haram follows the RAFT model. As with the previous case studies, actors are discussed first followed by relationships, functions, and tensions. Only one RAFT analysis is included here in order to maintain the focus on the U.S. government use of labels in strategic communication at the national-leadership level. The primary actors discussed in this analysis are, the president of the United States, the United States Department of State, and the United States Department of Defense. Relationships, functions, and tensions will be discussed after identification of the actors.

The president is the nation's primary actor in the use of labels in strategic communication on the domestic and international stages. He is in a singular position to influence public opinion and formalize national interests. "The United States is the world's greatest superpower, and the president of the United States is its most powerful foreign policy-maker and a world leader" (Snow and Brown 1994, 31). The president uses his role on the national and international stage to codify national interests and present them to the public through statements and strategic documents. The annual State of the Union and the *National Security Strategy* (NSS) and public addresses are ways the President uses the informational instrument of power to inform the population of changes in policy or national interests.

In both the 2011 and 2014 *State of the Union* addresses, President Obama used the label "terrorists" and "terrorist networks" to label threat groups and their members (Obama 2014a; Obama 2011). In both of these addresses the threat group being labeled was "al Qaeda and their affiliates" (Obama 2011; Obama 2014a). In the 2015 address the

president used the same label to identify ISIL (*Daesh*) showing a trend in identifying the threat group by their chosen name.

President Obama has continued the trend of not associating threat groups to established religions that President George W. Bush began in his 2002 *State of the Union Address*. In the 2002 address, President Bush specified the dedication of the United States to “religious tolerance” and the need of support from the “Islamic world” to achieve the stated national objectives of “a just and peaceful world” (Bush 2002). President Obama shows wisdom in continuing to use labels against threat groups that distinguish the target group from the religion claimed.

This distinction has not only been used in the *State of the Union* addresses, but also in the *National Security Strategy* outlined by Presidents Bush and Obama. In the 2010 NSS, the president delineates the distinct difference between the religion of Islam and the al-Qa’ida terrorist organization. He states, “We reject the notion that al-Qa’ida represents any religious authority. They are not religious leaders, they are killers; and neither Islam nor any other religion condones the slaughter of innocents” (Obama 2010, 22). Statements such as these set the precedent for the response from the president to the new threat posed by ISIS (*Daesh*).

The labels used to identify threats by presidents within the *National Security Strategy* since 2002 have been “terrorists” and “violent extremists”. Since the attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, there have been several threat groups that use an interpretation of Islamic principles to legitimize their efforts. While there is a trend of referring to these groups by their chosen name, the parallel trend is to attempt to dissociate them from religious affiliation.

An example of this attempted dissociation occurred on September 10, 2014. President Obama addressed the nation regarding the organization calling themselves the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. He stated, “ISIL is not “Islamic”. And ISIL is certainly not a state” (Obama 2014b). The president considered precedent by refusing to use the labels ‘Islamic’ and ‘state’ in reference to this organization.

The act of purposely not referring to recent threat groups with their claimed religious affiliation is intended to focus on the threat to security. The labels used by Presidents Bush and Obama in their strategic communication are: “terrorists,” and “violent extremists” The danger is a shift in public opinion from the threat group itself to the religion, race, or culture. It is important that national actors follow the lead of the president in their strategic communication.

The United States Secretary of State and the Department of State have continued to use the labels established by the president in their strategic communication. The Department of State uses the informational instrument of national power through the Bureau for Public Affairs. Within the Public Affairs bureau is the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC), the primary conduit for strategic communication against terrorist organizations.

The purpose of the Department of State’s Bureau of Public Affairs is to engage “domestic and international media to communicate timely and accurate information with the goal of furthering U.S. foreign policy and national security interests as well as broadening understanding of American values” (U.S. Department of State 2015). A primary way the bureau does this is by conducting “strategic and tactical communications planning to advance America’s foreign policy interests” (U.S. Department of State 2015).

The 2010 *National Security Strategy* states strategic communication as “essential to sustaining global legitimacy and supporting our policy aims” (Obama 2010, 16). This statement is included in the “Whole of Government Approach” (Obama 2010, 14-16) portion of the *NSS*.

The Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC) “was established at the direction of the President and the Secretary of State to coordinate, orient, and inform government-wide foreign communications activities targeted against terrorism and violent extremism, particularly al-Qaida and its affiliates and adherents” (U.S. Department of State 2015). The CSCC presents the U.S. narrative on terrorist organizations by using online blogs and social media networks. The social media releases of images and information present a complete body of information for public consumption. The intent is to present multiple perspectives on events without editorializing for the public to form their own opinion of threat group activities. “Images and symbols can achieve huge impact in communicating narratives, themes, and messages” (Farwell 2012, 79). These images and the associated information create a counter-message for public consumption. This counter-message works against the threat group by showing a discrepancy between declared purpose and the actions performed.

“Strategic narratives are a means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behavior of domestic and international actors. Strategic narratives are a tool for political actors to extend their influence, manage expectations, and change the discursive environment in which they operate. The point of strategic narratives is to influence the behavior of others” (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Rose 2013, 2). Simply put, the method used to

craft a strategic narrative is to explain a correlation between past events to current events to influence public opinion toward a specific course of action. Effective use of the informational instrument of national power is essential to furthering national interests domestically and internationally.

The United States Department of Defense supports the national interests identified by the president through the military instrument of national power. Effective use of the informational instrument is key to understanding the U.S. use of the military in response to a national threat. The DoD uses information within all levels to communicate the strategic mission and intent.

The Department of Defense publishes a series of documents that depict the use of the informational instrument of power by the military. The DoD strategy for using the military instrument of power to achieve national objectives is explained in the *Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)*, the *Nuclear Posture Review*, the *Ballistic Missile Defense Review*, and the *Space Posture Review*. The labels that were used in the 2006, 2010, and 2014 QDR demonstrate DoD compliance with the strategic communication set forth by the president. With the 2014 QDR even using the label “violent extremists” when referring to domestic groups threatening national security (Department of Defense 2014). The QDR communicates the DoD strategy that will be followed in order to achieve the national interests as communicated by the president.

In *Planning for Action: Campaign Concepts and Tools*, Dr. Kem defines strategy as “the linkage of ends, ways, and means to meet national objectives” (Kem 2012, 19). Strategic communication is then the means by which the national objectives are packaged for public consumption. Dr. Farwell presents the Pentagon definition of strategic

communication as, “focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives throughout the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power” (Farwell 2012, xvii-xviii).

The DoD uses doctrinal and pre-doctrinal publications to codify the methods used to identify a threat at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. The importance of the narrative used is discussed in the pre-doctrinal *Commander’s Handbook for Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy*. This handbook discusses the “Battle of the Narrative” expressing that gaining “superiority over the enemy’s narrative” (US Joint Forces Command Joint Warfighting Center 2010, II-13) should not be seen as the final objective. The handbook points out that the opposing narrative “doesn’t diminish in appeal or followership, it becomes irrelevant” (US Joint Forces Command Joint Warfighting Center 2010, II-13). This indicates that the threat is still extremely viable and should not be ignored due to a perceived “win” in the informational domain.

Similarly, to what was shown in the Boko Haram case study, the relationship between the actors discussed here is hierarchical in nature. The president sets the tone for the labels used to identify the threat and specifically the language used. In order to present a unified front, the Department of State and the Department of Defense have used the same labels in their strategic communication. It is important for these departments to use the same language in order to avoid confusion among partner nations regarding U.S. foreign policy and the use of the military instrument of power.

The functions of the actors discussed here is to efficiently use the informational instrument of power to present the national interests to domestic and international audiences. The way the strategic communication is presented is important to gaining support from partner nations. An example of this is shown by the support gained by the continued dissociation of religion from threat groups. The continued assertion by President Obama that “ISIS is not Islamic” has resulted in external support for United States. In March 2015, King Abdullah of Jordan declared his agreement “with President Obama's decision not to label Islamic State terrorists “Islamic extremists” because to do so would legitimize their perversion of Islam” (Chasmar 2015).

Tensions have arisen on the national stage from the president labeling threat groups as “terrorist organizations” and “violent extremists” instead of associating them with the Islamic religion. President Obama has chosen to continue the narrative established by President George W. Bush when he says, “We reject the lie that America and its allies are at war with Islam” (Obama 2015a, 9). Although tensions between the actors discussed in this case study exist, they have not prevented the cohesiveness needed to present a unified front. The DoS and DoD are dedicated to supporting the president in the achievement of national interests.

### Labels

What labels were used to identify the threat group, and by whom? Each of the actors discussed in the RAFT analysis used the “terrorist” and “violent extremist” labels in their strategic communication. These labels focus on the violence and effects of the acts being committed by the target threat group.



The labels the United States Government has used to refer to threat groups are “terrorist(s)” and “Violent Extremist(s)”. Each of the actors discussed, the President of the United States, The Department of State, and the Department of Defense have used these labels in written and spoken form. The consistent use of these labels by the U.S. government is important because they do not discriminate between race, religion, or culture.

### Analysis

What was the narrative presented by the government and the threat group? The narrative presented by the United States strategic communication is the same for all actors identified in the RAFT analysis of this case study. Each actor projects the narrative that the top priority is the “security of the American people” (Obama 2014a) as well as protection of national interests (Obama, 2015a).

What effect did the narratives have on the local and national population? Support for the president varies and it is difficult to definitively determine the effectiveness of the narrative delivered. President Obama has been publicly criticized for refusing to associate Islam with al-Qa’ida and ISIS (*Daesh*). This refusal has resulted in a lack of domestic support for his efforts in combating this threat. Had the president used religion as a label there would have been a decrease in support from Jordan and other nations and it would have set a dangerous precedent for future strategic communication.

Whose label, the threat group or the government, was successful in shifting public opinion? The answer to this question cannot be definitively determined within this case study. The reason there is no answer is because a single threat was not used in this case study.

Table 5. Evaluation Criteria–Labels in USG Strategic Communication				
	I. “Jewish Threat” Propaganda	II. Countering Boko Haram	III. Countering ISIS	IV. Labels in U.S. Strategic Communication
a. What labels were used and by whom?	“Non-Aryan”, “Outsiders”. “International Jewry”	BH: “Jihadist” USG: “Violent Extremists” GoN:	ISIS: “jihadist”, “the truthful”, and “infidel” USG: “violent extremists”, “not Islamic”	“Terrorists” “Violent Extremists”
b. What was the narrative presented and by whom?	“Jews are subhuman and the root of all German problems”	BH: “We are true followers of Islam” USG: “BH is a destabilizing factor in the region”	ISIS: “We are strong, and we are winning” USG: “We will defeat ISIS”	“Security of the American people and national interests is top priority.”
c. What effect did the narratives have?	Minimal resistance putting Jews in concentration camps	BH: ISIS has agreed to an alliance USG / Nigeria: Cannot be determined at this time	ISIS: support continues and recruitment rises. USG: mixed between domestic criticism of communication and support from partner nations	Mixed domestic and international support for the labels used.
d. Whose label shifted public opinion?	Nazi control of communication and harsh consequences shifted opinion against Jews	Final determination cannot be made, however, “Boko Haram” and “violent extremists” continue to be used	Final determination cannot be made, however, support continues for both ISIS and USG efforts	Final determination cannot be made
e. Which element of national power was used to emphasize the label?	Nazi government used the Economic and Military instruments	USG: Diplomatic and Economic Nigeria: Diplomatic and Military	ISIS: Military and Diplomatic USG: Military and Diplomatic	Diplomatic and Military
f. How timely was the response delivered?	Immediate and continuous pro and anti the Nazi narrative	Immediate and continuous on a national and international stage	USG: President Obama address was 22 days after the death of James Foley	On a routine schedule and as needed depending on the situation

Source: Created by author.

Which element of national power, if any, was used to emphasize the communication of the label used? The informational instrument of national power interacts with each other part of the DIME to communicate the intent of the action taken. Efficient use of Information provides the citizens of the US a needed clarity of purpose

for the actions being taken toward a specific issue. This case study has shown clear dovetailing of the diplomatic and military instruments of power to emphasize and clarify the label being used.

How timely was the strategic response delivered? The actors discussed in this case study routinely deliver strategic communication in the form of the addresses and official documents that specify the national interests. Strategic communication is also delivered when specific events call for a response that does not fall within the prescribed communication timeline.

### Summary and Application

When national leadership informs the nation regarding actions that will be taken to counter a threat to national security, the label used should be a big part of the communication. The decision to label the threat should be carefully considered to define the posture taken against the specified threat. Joint Publication 1 states “nations exercise their power through diplomatic, informational, military, and economic means” (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2013, I-3).

The RAFT analysis above shows a direct hierarchical relationship between the actors in the United States government. This relationship has resulted in an absence of tensions that would deteriorate the use of labels in strategic communication. The analysis also shows a clear aversion from associating religion with a threat group. This refusal to tie a threat group to a particular religion assists in legitimizing U.S. efforts on the international stage. The result of this legitimization is increased support from partner nations.

The primary question is, “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of national strategy?” Based on this case study the answer to the primary question is: yes, the labels used when discussing a threat group should be carefully considered. However, yes is not the complete answer. In addition to yes, this case study shows that, care should be taken in the crafting of the label to avoid unnecessary association with a religion, culture, or race. Association with religious, cultural, and racial characteristics may lead to a shift in the focus from a group that poses a threat to national security to a racist agenda.

### Chapter Summary and Conclusion

The analysis conducted in this chapter resulted in the following answer to the primary research question. Yes, labels should be carefully considered in the communication of national strategy with four caveats. These are the caveats that should be included, (1) the opposition must always be allowed a voice; (2) the label chosen should focus on the problem caused by the group instead of the internal demographic composition; (3) the label chosen must be nested within a complete narrative; and (4) the label should not be associated with a specific religion, culture, or race. These caveats are based on the results of each case study.

The next chapter, chapter 5, includes a summary of the case study findings from this chapter. Chapter 5 also discusses conclusions and recommendations based on the answer to the primary research question. Finally, chapter 5 also presents suggestions for further research in topics related to this thesis.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This chapter is a discussion of the answer to the primary research question “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of the narrative as part of national strategy?” The answer, derived from the case studies analyzed in chapter 4, is: Yes, labels should be carefully considered in the communication of national strategy with four caveats. These are the caveats that should be included, (1) the opposition must always be allowed a voice; (2) the label chosen should focus on the problem caused by the group instead of the internal demographic composition; (3) the label chosen must be nested within a complete narrative; and (4) the label should not be associated with a specific religion, culture, or race. These caveats are based on the results of each case study.

This chapter is divided into four segments conclusions, recommendations, suggested topics for further research, and final closing thoughts. The conclusions segment is a summary of the pertinent facts within each case study that support the answer as part of the conclusion. The next segment outlines recommendations for steps that should be taken to effectively use labels within communication at strategic levels. The suggestions included in the future research segment are derived from topics that were not explored in depth within the scope of this thesis. The fourth segment contains final thoughts regarding the topic of labeling as part of the informational instrument of national power. Included within the closing thoughts is a caveat against extreme use of labels combined with the silencing of voices of opposition.

## Conclusions

George Washington was a militant, insurgent, and terrorist! This statement is likely to offend quite a number of people. The label used in a narrative is as important as the narrative itself to influence the audience for or against a cause or opinion. Take the following statement as an example; George Washington was a noble Patriot and Revolutionary! The reactions to these statements are vivid.

When President Obama said, “ISIL is not “Islamic,” (Obama 2014b) he gave reasons supporting the statement. The president did not, however, provide another term to use in the narrative against this group. President Obama used the narrative that ISIL was not Islamic in an attempt to use information as an instrument of national power. What was missing in the president’s statement was a label to use instead of “Islamic.” The Islamic State seeks to use Muslim terminology as a source of legitimacy and power. The closer the term is tied to traditional or historical perceptions of Islam the more power can be derived from it.

The Islamic State has demonstrated careful thought, consideration, and research in the development of their use of terminology. The intent appears to be a reformation of sorts for Islam as a whole, and to create an appealing cause. The cause can be used to attract followers to the ideology.

Words are useful tools to communicate understanding, determination, meaning, and intent. A whole of government strategy is incomplete without the effective use of information as an instrument of national power. National political and military leadership inform citizens, allies, and adversaries of national policies through strategic communication.

The overuse of words, like terrorist, has a tendency to reduce the original effect those words have on a population. ‘Terrorist’ then becomes the catchall label applied to any group; regardless of the scale and scope of the terrorism, these groups or individuals create. Further, the intent of some groups is to be labeled ‘terrorist’ to increase the legitimacy of their military force and to blend in with the myriad other groups that are so labeled.

The case study analysis in chapter 4 resulted in four distinct considerations that should be included while crafting the narrative and determined before communicating national strategy. The first caveat for consideration of a narrative and strategy is that opposing opinions should be afforded the opportunity to speak. This is a matter of national policy that must remain in effect for the public to have access to all the available information in order to form an educated opinion. This factor was illustrated in the “Jewish Threat” case study. Because the Nazi regime controlled the national communications instruments and forbade opposition in written or spoken form, the government was able to control the influence of public opinion by controlling the available information.

The second caveat for consideration of a narrative and strategy is to focus on the activities being conducted that pose a threat to national security. This factor was illustrated in the Boko Haram case study. The U.S. and Nigerian response was focused on the disruptive nature of the threat posed by Boko Haram. The government narrative did not focus on the demographic composition of the threat group in order to maintain national legitimacy. A government loses legitimacy when they are unable to protect their population. In contrast, the threat group narrative focused on the religious basis for their

actions. The Boko Haram narrative sought religious legitimacy through basis on their interpretation of Islamic principles.

The third caveat for consideration of a narrative and strategy focuses on the narrative in which the labels is being used. This factor was illustrated in the ISIS (*Daesh*) case study. In his communication of the strategy being taken to counter ISIS, President Obama countered their claim of being Islamic. However, the president did not provide a substitute label with which to refer to the threat group. The Boko Haram case study illustrated the use of a label not chosen by the group that has taken over their official name. Response to the statement “ISIL is not Islamic” (Obama 2014b) has resulted in overt criticism of the president and the strategy presented. This response has shifted the focus from the efforts taken to counter the group to a discussion of the reasons behind the label being used.

The fourth, and final, caveat for consideration of a narrative and strategy is the care needed to avoid unnecessary association of a threat group with a religion, culture, or race. This factor was illustrated in the USG Strategic Communication case study. As shown in the case study, the U.S. has established a precedent for not directing attacks against established religions, cultures, or races. This has resulted in increased support from external nations for U.S. actions against threat groups, as shown by the supportive statement of King Abdullah of Jordan. The danger posed by using religious, cultural, or race-related labels in conjunction with threat groups is in the resulting transference of the threat. As discussed in the additional sources portion of the chapter 2, this transference occurs when the threat becomes the specific demographic composition of the group rather than the specific group itself.



Table 6. Evaluation Criteria–Labels Used in Strategic Communication Case Studies				
	I. “Jewish Threat” Propaganda	II. Countering Boko Haram	III. Countering ISIS	IV. Labels in U.S. Strategic Communication
a. What labels were used and by whom?	“Non-Aryan”, “Outsiders”. “International Jewry”	BH: “Jihadist” USG: “Violent Extremists” GoN:	ISIS: “jihadist”, “the truthful”, and “infidel” USG: “violent extremists”, “not Islamic”	“Terrorists” “Violent Extremists”
b. What was the narrative presented and by whom?	“Jews are subhuman and the root of all German problems”	BH: “We are true followers of Islam” USG: “BH is a destabilizing factor in the region”	ISIS: “We are strong, and we are winning” USG: “We will defeat ISIS”	“Security of the American people and national interests is top priority.”
c. What effect did the narratives have?	Minimal resistance putting Jews in concentration camps	BH: ISIS has agreed to an alliance USG / Nigeria: Cannot be determined at this time	ISIS: support continues and recruitment rises. USG: mixed between domestic criticism of communication and support from partner nations	Mixed domestic and international support for the labels used.
d. Whose label shifted public opinion?	Nazi control of communication and harsh consequences shifted opinion against Jews	Final determination cannot be made, however, “Boko Haram” and “violent extremists” continue to be used	Final determination cannot be made, however, support continues for both ISIS and USG efforts	Final determination cannot be made
e. Which element of national power was used to emphasize the label?	Nazi government used the Economic and Military instruments	USG: Diplomatic and Economic Nigeria: Diplomatic and Military	ISIS: Military and Diplomatic USG: Military and Diplomatic	Diplomatic and Military
f. How timely was the response delivered?	Immediate and continuous pro and anti the Nazi narrative	Immediate and continuous on a national and international stage	USG: President Obama address was 22 days after the death of James Foley	On a routine schedule and as needed depending on the situation

Source: Created by author.

### Recommendations

The researcher recommends careful consideration be taken when crafting the narrative of how national strategy addresses a threat group. A comprehensive understanding of the threat and the audience is needed to avoid expending unnecessary energy addressing gaps in the narrative. Threat groups become a factor when they affect U.S. national security or national interests on the international stage. The strategic communication given by national level leadership should include a carefully chosen and established label by which to identify the specific threat group.

The crafting of the label used for an identified threat group should be tempered by the four factors discussed in this thesis. The four caveats that should be considered are, (1) the opposition must always be allowed a voice; (2) the label chosen should focus on the problem caused by the group instead of the internal demographic composition; (3) the label chosen must be nested within a complete narrative; and (4) the label should not be associated with a specific religion, culture, or race.

### Suggested Topics for Further Research

This thesis used four case studies to answer the primary question regarding the use of labels to identify threat groups in strategic communication. The case studies illustrated a level of success achieved from the use of the informational instrument of national power against a threat group. The process of conducting this research generated several topics for future research. These topics are listed here.

The first topic suggestion is a quantitative analysis of the effect generated by the decision to not give Irish Republican Army (IRA) prisoners “political status.” This decision resulted in prisoner hunger strikes that ended in the several prisoners dying from

starvation. Some initial source material for this topic are, Thomas Hennessey's *Hunger Strike: Margaret Thatcher's Battle with the IRA 1980-1981* and Richard English's *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*.

The second topic suggestion is a historical analysis of the Muslim Brotherhood's beginnings and their association with Nazi Germany. This analysis should include a comparison of ideologies and methods of recruitment that have resulted in attempted genocide. Some initial source material for this topic are, Charles River Editors' *The Muslim Brotherhood: The History of the Middle East's Most Influential Islamist Group*, Ian Johnson's *A Mosque in Munich: Nazis, the CIA, and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, Matthias Kuntzel's *Jihad and Jew-Hatred: Islamism, Nazism, and the Roots of 9/11*, and finally Barry Rubin and Wolfgang G. Schwanitz' *Nazis, Islamists, and the Making of the Modern Middle East*.

The third topic suggestion is the ethical justification for using abrasive and or dehumanizing labels against threat groups. This analysis should expand on the recommended dissociation of threat groups with religious, cultural, and race demographics. Some initial source material for this topic are, Erin Steuter and Deborah Wills' *At War with Metaphor*, Carol K. Winkler's *In the Name of Terrorism* and Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle's *Strategic Narratives: Communication, Power, and the New World Order*.

The fourth suggestion is an in depth analysis on the definition of 'public conversation' and its relationship to strategic communication. Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle use the terminology "media spaces" in their discussion of future strategic communication involving political and private actors. "Those working in strategic

communication and public diplomacy might be engaged, while also trying to penetrate and enter discussion in existing media spaces such as regional broadcast channels and Internet forums” (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin and Rose 2013, 150). A starting point for this research topic is Chapter 5 “Information Infrastructure” of *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order* by Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle. This chapter discusses “a new kind of media ecology and new hierarchy of international political communication in which “the people” are given an important role as vehicles of strategic narratives” (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin and Rose 2013, 149).

The final topic suggestion is further analysis of the use of labels, strategic communication, and the informational instrument of power as a response to Boko Haram and ISIS (*Daesh*). Since the information cut-off date, there have been significant developments in both situations that support the need for further analysis. Included in this research recommendation should be a detailed examination of the methods, terminology, and labels used by each extremist organization.

### Closing Thoughts

This research thesis sought to answer the question “Should the application of labels toward threat groups factor into the communication of the narrative as part of national strategy?”

Effective strategic communication utilizes labels against adversaries to degrade their sources of power. Some modern adversarial groups attempt to use the religion of Islam as a source of legitimacy and power to attract followers and allies. Effective use of labeling would seek to remove the focus from the religion espoused by the group and shift to the actions of the group. Focus on these actions would then show the true

brutality of the group and the intent of their actions. The successful removal of the focus from the religious source of power would then legitimize further governmental actions against the adversarial groups.

In Iraq and Syria, American leadership -- including our military power -- is stopping ISIL's advance. Instead of getting dragged into another ground war in the Middle East, we are leading a broad coalition, including Arab nations, to degrade and ultimately destroy this terrorist group. We're also supporting a moderate opposition in Syria that can help us in this effort, and assisting people everywhere who stand up to the bankrupt ideology of violent extremism.

Now, this effort will take time. It will require focus. But we will succeed.  
(Obama 2015b)

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